

## APPENDIX V

**Template of the ERDF supported programmes (goal „Investment for growth and jobs“, ESF +, the JTF, Cohesion Fund and EMFAF — article 16, paragraph 3**

<b>CCI</b>	BG Програма за храни и основно материално подпомагане
<b>Name in BG</b>	[255 symbols <sup>1</sup> ] <b>Programme for Food and Basic Material Support</b>
<b>Name in national language</b>	[255]
<b>Version</b>	1.2
<b>First year</b>	2021
<b>Last year</b>	2027
<b>Eligible from</b>	
<b>Eligible to</b>	
<b>Commission resolution Number</b>	
<b>Commission resolution date</b>	
<b>Amendment resolution number of member state</b>	
<b>Date of entry into force of amendment resolution of member state</b>	
<b>Minor transfer (art. 19.5)</b>	Yes/No
<b>Regions under NUTS, covered by the programme (not applicable for EMFF)</b>	.....
<b>Respective fund</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ERDF
	<input type="checkbox"/> Cohesion Fund
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ESF+
	<input type="checkbox"/> JTF
	<input type="checkbox"/> EMFAF

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<sup>1</sup> The numbers in the square brackets refer to the number of symbols.

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## 1. Programme strategy: main development challenges and policy answers

*Reference: Article 17, paragraph 3, letter a), items i)-viii) and article 17, paragraph 3, letter b)*

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The Programme for Food and Basic Material Support 2021-2027 (FP) shall contribute actively to the implementation of the specific Union's objective aimed at tackling the problem of material deprivation through food and basic material support. In 2019, 21.4% of the total population of the EU-28 live at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Bulgaria is one of the countries facing challenges in terms of a number of elements of the set of social indicators specified in support of European pillar of social rights. The country is still first in the highest number of people living at risk of poverty or social exclusion as well as of high levels of inequality in terms of income. The percentage of people living in poverty is still very high, and inequalities in income increase.

According to the data of the 2019 Statistics on Income and Living Conditions study (EU-SILC) carried out by the National Statistical Institute, the 2019 poverty line for the country is BGN 413.04 on average monthly basis per a household member<sup>2</sup>. Given this number, 1 586.2 thousand people have been below the poverty line or 22.6% of the country population. The relative share of poor people is higher among the unemployed (58.9% for 2019), the risk of poverty for unemployed men was 14.2 percentage points higher than that of unemployed women. The educational attainment has a significant impact on the risk of poverty for employees. The relative share of working poor people with primary or no education is the highest - 55.5%. The poverty estimations based on the household type show that the highest relative share is that of poor people of families of a single person aged over 65, single parents with children as well as households with children and households with three or more children.

In 2019, 12% of the EU-28 population suffers from severe material deprivation. This rate is an estimate of the proportion of people whose living conditions are severely affected by the lack of resources. In Bulgaria, the highest number of people experience restrictions in terms of timely payment of dwelling-related costs (29.3%). Along with this, 27,6% of people cannot afford the consumption of meat, chicken or fish every second day and 36,5% of people cannot meet any unexpected financial costs by their own funds. Restrictions on heating of the home are experienced by 30,1 % of people. In 2019, 19,9% % of the population live in material deprivation (restrictions in 4 of 9 indicators). According to NSI data, the funds spent for food and soft drinks in 2019 amount to BGN 1 833 per household member which is 6.9% % more than in 2018 and 50.4% more than in 2010. In 2019, the relative share of expenditures for food is 29.5% of the total expenditure, which are 0.2 percentage points less than in 2018 and 7.7 percentage points less than in 2010. Despite the reported reduction, the expenditures for food remain the basic expenditures in Bulgarian households.

Poverty and severe material deprivation in Bulgaria are particularly **expressed in several major groups: Children** are among the groups most affected by poverty, which reduces their chances of good education and normal childhood and hence for their development as future citizens actively involved in the socio-economic development of the country. According to Eurostat data in 2019, the relative share of children (0 to 17 years) that live in material and

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<sup>2</sup> Total net disposable income is used in the Eurostat methodology for investigating the poverty level. The poverty line is 60% of the average total net disposable income per equivalent unit.

social deprivation was 27.5%. In 2019, approximately seven out of ten children (68.3%) whose parents have primary or no education live in poverty. Approximately 16 times fewer, or 4.3%, are children whose parents have a college education and live at risk of poverty. The risk of poverty for children in households with parents with secondary education is seven times higher than for children with parents with tertiary education. The capacity to cover certain needs to children varies depending on the ethnic origin of respondents. In 2019, the relative share of **children with material deprivation** (deprived of at least one of 13 indicators) was as follows: 30.5% of Bulgarian ethnic group, 45.4% of the Turkish ethnic group, 83.1% of the Roma ethnic group and 28.1% of other ethnicity. No one need of children (restrictions on all the 13 indicators) may be provided to 2.0% of children of Bulgarian ethnic group, to 2.7% of Turkish ethnic group and 18.9% to the Roma group. About 25% of children with material deprivation of Bulgarian ethnic group also live in risk of poverty. For the other groups, the relative shares are as follows: 29.2% of the Turkish ethnic group, 70.4% of the Roma ethnic group and 29.6% - to children of other ethnicity. According to NSI data, in 2019, the relative share of Bulgarian children that cannot be provided at least one meal a day including meat, chicken or fish and fresh fruit at least once a day is 17.6%.

**Older people** are another large group, the risk of poverty for which is high, in particular, in view of the persistent trends of ageing of population. These demographic trends are characteristic of the majority of European countries. In Bulgaria, the relative share of people aged below 15 is 14.4% and that of the population over 65 is steadily growing - from 21.3% in 2018 to 21.6% in 2019. In 2019, 34.6% of the people aged 65 or more are in risk of poverty. In the same age group, 32.7% live in material deprivation. This often puts this population group in high dependence on support by both other family members and by the state. The vast majority of this population group is unable to have a decent life and to meet its basic living needs. According to the *Active Ageing Index*, Bulgaria is far behind on many indicators of their quality of life. In 2019, almost ½ of the people of age of over 65 are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, %. Despite the indexation of pensions over recent years, more than 800,000 pensioners still have pensions that are below the poverty line for the country. A large number of these people fall within the social assistance scope. The programme addresses measures to those people of retiring age, whose income of pensions are the only source of livelihood and who are at high risk of poverty and are at high risk of poverty and social exclusion.

**Roma people still face numerous challenges.** The concentration of the representatives of this vulnerable ethnic group in distinct neighbourhoods and areas leads to social exclusion, deterioration of housing and sanitary conditions. The proportion of Roma people exposed to a risk of poverty or social exclusion is estimated to about 90%<sup>3</sup>. About 70% of the Roma children of age between 7 and 15 remain outside the education system and many of them are not enrolled in kindergartens<sup>4</sup>. In 2019, the risk of poverty (64.8%) among Roma still remains very high. 44,3% of Roma are still deprived of basic sanitary conditions. One of the main national objectives is to provide conditions for improving their participation in education and to reduce their drop-off from the education system. The programme is intended to complement the integrated measures supported by the European Social Fund+ by focusing on the provision of nourishing food for children in infancy, including children from vulnerable ethnic groups. Through the parallel measures implemented, the programme will work to identify and direct the people in most need to the services and measures provided to support their social inclusion and support for responsible parenting for their families. This will ensure the complexity of

<sup>3</sup> Second study on the situation of minorities and discrimination in the European Union - Roma - Selected results, EC.

<sup>4</sup> Second study on the situation of minorities and discrimination in the European Union - Roma - Selected results, EC.

support so that children are covered by the education system once reaching the age of 3. Bulgaria ranks first in the European Union (EU) in the share of people with disabilities and limitations who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, according to Eurostat data. A total of 50.7% of people with disabilities and activity limitations aged 16 and over in the country are at high risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2019, the data show. This is almost double the EU average of 28.4%. Slovakia has the lowest proportion of disabled people at risk of poverty and social exclusion at 19.2%, twice the EU average. Ahead of this is Denmark, as well as Austria, Finland, France. In addition to the national measures to support persons with disabilities, the programme provides support for those representatives of this target group who are at highest risk of poverty and subject to identified high levels of material deprivation. **Homeless people** form another large group at risk of poverty. The data of the National Statistical Institute are only based on a count of the persons who have passed through temporary accommodation centres and shelters but this is far from taking into account the actual number of homeless people. The number of homeless adults has increased in recent years in the country, poverty being undoubtedly one of the main causes of homelessness. The forthcoming reform in the field of social services in Bulgaria laid down in the Social Services Act provides new services, identification and comprehensive support of this target group. The programme will provide an opportunity for homeless people to get a hot lunch and the implementation of accompanying measures will help to direct them to such services as well as to the centres for temporary accommodation and shelters existing in the municipalities. In the 2014-2020 programming period, the food support measures implemented under the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived were focused on the most vulnerable persons in the country on the basis of objective criteria laid down in national legislation and on the basis of an assessment of the needs of people experiencing material deprivation. The structured survey of end-users of the aid and the external evaluation of the programme confirmed that the aid was well targeted, taking into account people's needs and the specific social conditions at national level. This approach has proven its effectiveness and adequacy in terms of the complementarity of social policies in the country and will continue to be applied in the future measures. The results of the Structured Survey of the final recipients under the programme for the period 2014-2020 show that more than a half (53%) of the assisted people with hot lunch live in **smaller towns**. Approximately equal shares of service users are residents of regional cities (23%) and villages (20%). An insignificant share (3%) of the beneficiaries live in the capital. In respect to people receiving food packages the most numerous is the group living in small towns – 42 %. The next group are the people living in regional towns – 41% of all beneficiaries of the assistance. 11% live in villages and 7 % live in the capital. The specifically focused and addressed measures implemented under the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived cannot be unambiguously identified as the only way to reduce the number of people living at risk of poverty and social exclusion if they are considered outside the context of the overall policy to overcome poverty in the country. The provision of food products and the provision of hot lunches have in practice contributed to the expansion of the effective scope of social assistance programmes, because the reduction of the basic expenditures for food in the household helps to release funds to meet other basic needs of poor households. On the basis of the demographic information collected in the course of the structured survey, the profile of the persons who can be identified as "typical" recipients of food support was outlined. These are predominantly low-educated, low-income, non-working (unemployed or retired) people living mainly in small towns and villages. Their families, partners and relatives also fall into similar categories, which indicates that poverty and social marginalisation are concentrated and affect not individuals, but their household as a whole. In this sense, the role of the assistance provided has been assessed as

extremely important and has helped people to cope with their basic needs. In 2019, support covered nearly 466 000 people, including over 128 000 children and nearly 127 000 persons with disabilities. More than 200 municipalities took part in providing a hot lunch for over 50,000 people in need. This programme will continue in line with the territorial approach applied so far, reaching the smallest and most remote settlements in the country and addressing the real needs of the most vulnerable citizens. The survey and the evaluation of the programme showed high levels of satisfaction among people with the support provided. Taking into account people's views, in the period 2021-2027, the programme will address once again measures to meet the existential needs of the most deprived, which will be the first step towards taking complex, consistent and sustainable measures for social inclusion. The identification of the persons and groups in the greatest need for support to overcome basic deprivation will be based on established national social assistance criteria. The social assistance policy in Bulgaria is part of the overall social protection system and functions as a set of programmes and tools aimed at supporting the most vulnerable layers of society, which are identified by a specific set of criteria set out in the national legislation. The largest share is of the aid granted on the basis of an income test. The mechanisms for access to the social assistance system are based on a number of criteria, but the basis consists in the two main parameters for access - guaranteed minimum income and a rate system governing the differentiating minimum income for a particular person, family or household to be supported. Guaranteed minimum income is a statutorily determined amount of resources used as a basis for determining the social assistance to ensure a minimum income to meet basic living needs of the people according to their age, marital status, health and property, working and education employment. The guaranteed minimum income is specified to be BGN 75 in 2019. In addition to the income test, for granting social assistance, an assessment is made of a number of criteria such as health status, age, marital status, status at the labour market, availability of any movable and/or immovable property that could be a source of income, as well as the possibility for support by people from the extended family circle. The poverty line will also be applied as a general indicator of support, in addition to national welfare rules. The social benefits provided are intended to ensure the basic living needs of poor individuals or families or to address their specific needs. Social benefits are resources that supplement or replace own income to basic living needs or satisfy any incidental needs of the supported individuals and families. Depending on their nature, the funds granted under the programmes of the social assistance system can be monthly, target benefits or lump sums. The social assistance is governed by several laws and the regulations of lower degree related to their implementation. In 2019, the structures of the Agency for Social Assistance in Bulgaria have provided assistance to 1,294,994 persons on various legal grounds. In 2018, their number was 1,182,504 persons. The efficiency in the allocation of funds under the applicable programmes for social assistance is high, in particular in view of the differentiated approach applied to needy individuals and groups. At the same time, the social assistance effect on the material status of assisted households is low, due to the relatively low amount of the benefits allocated, considered as a proportion of the consumption of the recipients of such benefits. As a result, the good coverage and targeting of the social assistance programmes are not always able to lead to actual reduction of the effects of poverty. The people covered by the social assistance system are most vulnerable in terms of the effects of poverty. They also pay the highest social cost. For them, it is necessary to implement measures that will contribute to reducing the spread of poverty and the dependence on the social assistance system. To achieve this, it is necessary to apply an integrated approach that contributes to sustainably overcome their social exclusion and to break the transmission of poverty across generations. Unfortunately, many of them have a vital need to be provided with food and/or basic material assistance before undertaking any action for their



social inclusion. Only when the existential needs are satisfied, various measures may be undertaken to accompany the needy people and to support them to permanently overcome poverty and its consequences where possible. The Agency for Social Assistance is the social assistance authority under the Social Assistance Act. The administration is directly involved in social assistance, maintaining an updated database of every person who is entitled to social security benefits or need them. Regardless of differentiated approach, on which the social assistance system is based, there are a number of individual cases in which people in a vulnerable situation remain outside the scope of any type of assistance. These are people who live on the brink of survival and for which any of the conditions for granting social assistance is not met. This range may include individuals and families who exceed by minimum amounts the income threshold for assistance or who do not meet any other condition, which does not change their objective financial situation and the level of material deprivation. The data of the Agency for Social Assistance show that the social assistance system most often leaves out persons with disabilities and retired individuals, whose only income from pensions is below the poverty threshold set for the country but at the same time exceeds the differentiated minimum income for assistance, people with psychic and mental disorders, homeless and others. These categories of people have been found by the Agency for Social Assistance and its territorial structures to live in extreme poverty, need assistance and support that cannot be provided to them. The programme will use the data, the resource and the capacity of the structures of the Social Assistance Agency in the approach to target the assistance to the most vulnerable people in the country. The programme contributes to achieving the national goals and priorities relating to the reduction of poverty. The 2030 National Development Programme (NDP 2030) adopted with Council of Ministers Decision 33 of 20.01.2020, sets a P11 Social Inclusion priority, one of the objectives of which aims at reducing the social inequalities and active social inclusion of the vulnerable groups by overcoming the severe material deprivation. The Food and Basic Material Support Programme will contribute to achieving the target value of 18% as set in terms of the Population at Risk of Poverty indicator, as part of a strategic goal to reduce the inequalities within NDP 2030 as well to achieve a target value of 25% in terms of the Population at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion indicator of the Social Inclusion priority. The programme will contribute to achieving the goals of the **Partnership Agreement** for the period 2021-2027, the quantitative expression of which is achievement at the end of the programming period a level of 600,000 people living at risk of poverty that will have been provided with food and material support under the Food and Basic Material Support Programme. The main goal of the **Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria** (version of 1.2 from april 2021) is to help repair the economic and social damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic. In pursuit of this goal, the Government has grouped a set of measures and reforms that with a special focus on disadvantaged people and individuals in order to achieve more inclusive and sustainable growth. Through a coordinated mechanism, the programme will contribute to the identification, support and follow-up of persons in need who have been referred to the most appropriate social support measures foreseen under ESF+ or the Recovery and Resilience Plan. Depending on their individual needs, people will be targeted to activities contributing to overcoming poverty, reducing social inequalities and active social inclusion, identified as priorities in the Plan. Thus, in addition to the provision of basic support - with food and material assistance, the programme will contribute to more sustainable poverty alleviation for a large group of people in need through comprehensive and targeted measures. The Programme will contribute to the implementation of the respective specific recommendations to Bulgaria as adopted **within the European Semester** and will be part of the national factors to achieve the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**. The implementation of the planned interventions will

address Goal 1, End Poverty in all its Forms Everywhere and some aspects of Goal 2, End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition and Promote Sustainable Agriculture, and Goal 10, Reduce Inequality within and among Countries of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Programme measures to support the policies **to combat poverty are consistent with the findings of the European Semester Country Report Bulgaria 2019 where Annex D: Investment Guidance** on Cohesion Policy Funding 2021-2027 for Bulgaria recommends to take measures against material deprivation by food support and basic material assistance for the most needy people. One of the key principles of **European Pillar of Social Rights is that children are entitled to protection from poverty** as well as to care of good quality. Children are highly dependent on the adults with whom they live and are not able alone to ensure their existence. By taking into account the factors generating poverty – unemployment, low education level, low income, etc., it is essential to prevent the transmission of poverty between generations. This requires integrated measures for investments into the early child's development – support to the children at their earliest age and to their family, in view to prevent the risks for their development, access to child care, school, support to employment for their parents, education as well as reconciliation of work and private life. Therefore, children from families for which the social assistance authorities have found high levels of poverty and risk by criteria defined in the national legislation will be a special focus of the programme. According to the Agency for Social Assistance data, a total of 3,781 cases of abandonment prevention were opened in 2020. In 2019, 3 471 cases were registered. These were children at risk of abandonment and separation from their birth families. Child's separation from their biological parents is most often due to poverty, disability, illness, lack of support and opportunities to provide a caring and secure environment. 4,604 children were housed in families of friends and relatives. The child protection departments have been working on 1,402 cases of reintegration in the biological families. The programme support will be oriented towards improvement of the well-being of children at risk by provision of full nutrition and material support to parents needed to raise a newborn. The focus will be also on children of households of low income, children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children living in poor housing conditions, children at risk of abandonment, etc., including children and families with whom the Child Protection departments work. The support provided under the programme for both children and all other people in need will be the first step towards meeting basic needs as part of complex investments for a better quality of life. In parallel with the support provided under the programme, accompanying measures will also be implemented, which will be individually oriented to the needs of the persons and groups covered and will be the mechanism by which the supported people will be directed to specific and complex social inclusion measures. This consistent, coordinated and comprehensive approach to supporting the most vulnerable Bulgarian citizens also contributes to the implementation of EU policies and priorities in the field of social rights, to promote best practices and cooperation at all levels and promote the EU values of equality and social justice. The strategic objective of the programme is to add a contribution to the overall national policy of mitigating and reducing poverty and overcoming the social exclusion. This objective will be achieved by providing support to overcome the main identified food deprivation and basic materials to ensure normal living conditions for people living in extreme poverty, experiencing severe material deprivation and living in social isolation. Based on the identified needs, the programme will focus its efforts on the following main Types of support, each complemented by accompanying measures:

- **Support type 1** Support with Food Packages and Hygiene Materials;

- **Support type 2** - Hot Lunch;

**- Support type 3 - Packages for New born Children;**

**- Support type 4 – Babies/Children Meals;**

In order to provide support that is properly addressed to the most deprived persons, data will be used from the Agency for Social Assistance, whose experts at local level have made assessment on a case-by-case basis according to objective criteria laid down in national legislation.

The accompanying measures provided under the programme will be individually oriented to the needs of the covered persons and groups and will be the mechanism through which the assisted will be directed to concrete and complex social inclusion measures. A database with information for the assisted persons under the programme will be set up, including information for their specific social profile and the profile of their family members. As a result, the final beneficiaries will receive information and will be directed to specific measures and projects implemented with the support of the ESF + under other programmes. The information on the results achieved for each targeted person will be reported back to the Managing Authority through a coordinated mechanism. This approach will be applied to all types of support implemented under the programme and will be an important starting point for coordination and planning of future measures to improve the quality of life of those most in need.

In addition, an external evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the support provided will be carried out during the implementation of the programme, which will also assess the contribution of the measures implemented in changing the status of the target groups.

***For the purpose of growth and employment:***

Table 1		
Policy objective 4 or JTF specific objective	Specific objective or special priority*	Justification (summary) [2 000 for each specific objective or special priority or JTF specific objective]



<b>4: A More Social Europe</b> <b>– Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights</b>	<b>Addressing the issue of material deprivation through food and basic material assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relative share of the persons exposed to a risk of poverty of 22.6% in 2019 against 16.5% of EU average.</li> <li>• In 2019, 34,6 % of the people aged 65 or more are in risk of poverty. In the same age group, 32.7% live in material deprivation.</li> <li>• According to Eurostat data in 2018, the relative share of children (0 to 17 years) that live in material and social deprivation was 29.0% against 12.7% of EU average.</li> <li>• A need for targeted investments to overcome the identified food deprivation and basic materials to ensure normal living conditions for people living in extreme poverty, experiencing severe material deprivation and living in social isolation</li> <li>• Investments will be also provided to complement the policies related to child welfare in the context of the Child Guarantee initiative;</li> <li>• Contribution will be added to the national priority 11. Social Inclusion to the development axis 4. Responsive and Just Bulgaria of the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030;</li> <li>• Contribution will be added to the implementation of Goals 1, 2 and 10 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals;</li> </ul> <p>Contribution will be added to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights;</p>
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## 2.Priorities

*Reference: Article 17 (2) and Article 17 (3) (c)*

### 2.A. Priorities other than technical assistance

**Table 1 T: Programme structure\***

*\* Information on this table will serve as technical input to prefill other fields and tables in the template in the electronic*

#### 2.1 Title of the priority [300] (repeated for each priority)

<input type="checkbox"/> This is a priority dedicated to youth employment
<input type="checkbox"/> This is a priority dedicated to innovative actions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This is a priority dedicated to addressing the most deprived according to specific objective set out in point xi, of article 4 of the ESF+ Regulation
<input type="checkbox"/> This This is a priority dedicated to support to the most deprived under the specific objective set out in point (x) of Article 4(1) of the ESF+ regulation

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> This is a priority dedicated to urban mobility specific objective set out in point (viii) of Article 2(b) of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund regulation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> This is a priority dedicated to ICT connectivity specific objective set out in point (v) of Article 2(a) of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund regulation  |

*\*\* If marked go to section 2.A.1.1 a*

**2.1.1. Specific objective<sup>5</sup> (Jobs and growth goal) or Area of support (EMFF) – repeated for each selected specific objective or area of support, for priorities other than technical assistance**

### **2.1.1.1 Interventions of the Funds – NOT APPLICABLE**

*Reference: Article 17(3)(d)(i)(iii), (iiia), (iv)(v)(vi) of the CPR;*

*The related types of actions – Article 17(3)(d)(i) of the CPR; article 6,(2) of the ESF+regulation:*

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*The main target groups - Article 17(3)(d)(iii):*

*Text field [1 000]*

*Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – Article 17(3)(d)(iiia) CPR*

*Text field(1000)*

*Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – Article 17(3)(d)(iv):*

*The interregional and transnational actions –Article – 17(3)(d)(v):*

*Text field [2 000]*

*The planned use of financial instruments – Article – 17(3)(d)(vi):*

*Text field [1 000]*

### **2.A1.1.2 Indicators<sup>6</sup>**

*Reference: Article 17(3)(d)(ii), Article 7, ERDF, Article 21(2) ESF+*

**Table 2: Output indicators**

<sup>5</sup> Except for the specific objective referred to in Article 4 (1) (c) (vii) of the ESF+ Regulation.

<sup>6</sup> Prior to the 2025 mid-term review for the ERDF, ESF+ and CF - breakdown only for the period 2021-2025.

Priority	Specific objective (Jobs and growth goal) or area of support (EMFF)	Fund	Category of region	ID [5]	Indicator [255]	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)

*Reference: Article 17(3)(d)(ii) and Article 21(2) ESF+*

Table 3: Result indicators											
Priority	Specific objective (Jobs and growth goal) or area of support (EMFF)	Fund	Category of region	ID [5]	Indicator [255]	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data [200]	Comments [200]
	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	ESF +	Less developed Transition	EM CR0 1	Number of end recipients receiving food support	Persons	490 000	2020		MA	The reference value is based on historical achievements in the previous programme, which can be considered as an appropriate comparison. Information on the reference value is taken from the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Operational Programme for Food and/or Basic Material Assistance 2014-2020, according to which the number of persons supported with food is as follows.: for 2020 - 488 712 with food packages and 39 973 with hot lunches
	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including	ESF +	Less developed Transition	EM CR1 0	Number of end recipients receiving	Persons	490 000	2020		MA	The reference value is based on information on the number of people supported in 2020 with food under the

	children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion				material support						2014-2020 Operational Programme for Food and/or Basic Material Assistance. The same group of persons is foreseen to be supported with hygiene packages in the period 2021-2027

### 2.1.1.3 Indicative breakdown of the programme resources (EU) by type of intervention<sup>7</sup> (not applicable to the EMFF)

Reference: Article 17(3)(d)(vii)

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field					
Priority №	Fund	Category of region	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
	ESF +	Less developed	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	127 Addressing material deprivation through food and/or material assistance to the most deprived, including accompanying measures	157 875 000
	ESF +	Transition	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	127 Addressing material deprivation through food and/or material assistance to the most deprived, including accompanying measures	31 575 000

<sup>7</sup> Prior to the 2025 mid-term review for the ERDF, ESF + and CF - breakdown only for the period 2021-2025.

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing					
Priority №	Fund	Category of region	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
	ESF +	Less developed	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	01 - Grants	157 875 000
	ESF +	Transition	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	01 - Grants	31 575 000

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus					
Priority №	Fund	Category of region	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
	ESF +	Less developed	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures	17 - Other types of territories targeted	157 875 000



			supporting their social inclusion		
	ESF +	Transition	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	17 - Other types of territories targeted	31 575 000

**Table 7: Dimension 6 - ESF+ secondary themes**

Priority №	Fund	Category of region	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
	ESF +	Less developed	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	09 – Not applicable	
	ESF +	Transition	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	09 – Not applicable	

Table 8: Dimension 7 - ESF+ <sup>8</sup> , ERDF, CF and JTF gender equality dimension					
Priority No	Fund	Category of region	Specific objective	Code (02 or 01 or 00)	Amount (EUR)
	ESF +	Less developed	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	03 – Gender neutral	157 875 000
	ESF +	Transition	(xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	03 – Gender neutral	31 575 000

### 2.A.1.1.a Specific objective to overcome material deprivation

*Reference: Article 17 (3); CPR, Article 18, ESF+*

*Types of support* **PACKAGES OF FOOD AND HYGIENE MATERIALS**

*Text field [2,000 characters]*

Support with food and hygiene materials contributes to covering the basic needs of the most vulnerable groups in the country who experience severe material deprivation. This type of support will contribute to reducing the basic household expenditures - for the provision of food and hygiene materials – for personal hygiene and home cleaning, thus allowing for the release of funds from the family budget to meet other basic needs. The packages will be distributed at least once a year. The choice of a type of support shall be justified, in addition to the experience acquired so far, and with the external evaluation of the support provided under the European Social Fund to the most deprived people. The external evaluation shows high satisfaction (92%)

<sup>8</sup> In principle, 40% for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100% is applicable when Member State chooses to use article 6(2), ESF+ as well as programme specific actions in gender equality

of the support with food packages and outlines the need of provision of additional material assistance with hygiene materials and cleaning products for the home in parallel with the provision of food. The **types of food products** to be included in the packages will be the basic food products used to prepare food for the entire family. When determining the contents of the packages, a balance will be sought so that they contain products from the main food groups necessary for a healthy and varied diet, such as protein-rich foods, cereals, etc. The content of the food packages will be consulted with the Ministry of Health and feedback from the end recipients of support will be sought in the course of the measure implementation. The **types of hygiene products** will be basic personal care products and cleaning products used by the whole family. The content will be determined on the basis of an analysis of the structure of the assisted families and households - age, gender and other characteristics of the persons in need, as well as taking into account their specific needs. The packages will indicatively contain - personal hygiene products, cleaning products and detergents.

... In addition to the provision of food products and hygiene materials, the selected beneficiary will implement some accompanying measures. Given the different profiles and ages of the persons of the target groups subject to support, the specific accompanying measures to be implemented for each person will be determined at the level of implementation of a project based on an individual assessment of the needs. **The accompanying measures** will be specifically focused on providing an opportunity for active participation in public life and overcoming the social isolation and may indicatively include: **conducting classes for basic computer literacy and use of social networks among the elderly, cooking, gathering of volunteers for mutual aid campaigns, organisation of cultural and sports activities, advice and referral to implemented social services and training and employment services financed by the ESF + national programs, etc.**

### ***Main target groups***

*Text field [2,000 characters]*

The food packages and packages with hygiene material will be directed to persons, families and households who are subject to social assistance, as well as for persons who are denied social assistance, whose income does not exceed the national poverty line and for whom the social assistance authorities have identified a high risk of poverty and social exclusion. The approach to determining the target groups will be based on the established national criteria for granting of social benefits. This range may include individuals and families who exceed by minimum amounts the income threshold for assistance, pensioners with income from pensions below the poverty line but exceeding the threshold of access to social assistance as well as people who do not meet any other complex condition, which does not change their objective financial situation and the level of material deprivation. Subject of assistance may also be persons who get into difficulty as a result of natural disasters, pandemics and others, force majeure in order to contain any emergency situations. A differentiated approach will be applied with regard to the quantity and, if applicable, the content of the packages, depending on the number of household members, age or other specific characteristics of the persons in need, so that the assistance is sufficient and corresponds to identified needs. Assistance will be based on an individual approach, needs assessment and objective assessment of the degree of vulnerability of persons.

In order to ensure flexibility in the implementation of the assistance, the target groups and their specific representatives who will receive support will be defined in detail with an Ordinance by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. The Ordinance will identify a main target group for

the respective type of support as well as an additional target group to which any unclaimed or undistributed food and hygiene materials to be redistributed. The data on the specific recipients of packages of food and packages of hygiene materials will be provided by the Agency for Social Assistance within a procedure and conditions set out in the Ordinance. In the case of a change in the national legislation regarding the scope and adequacy of the support provided, these changes will also be taken into account when defining the target groups for support.

*... .Decryption of the national or regional schemes of support*

*Text field [2,000 characters]-*

• ***Complementarity with other measures under ESF+ and national support schemes:***

*The complementarity will be guaranteed and implemented through:*

- Programming of complex, complementary measures planned under the Human Resource Development Programme and the Programme for Food and Basic Material Support.
- Creation of a mechanism for exchange of data and provision of information to and from beneficiaries and other Managing authorities to address specific measures to support the representatives of the target groups when possible and according to their profile. The programme will provide data on the assisted persons, including the specific social profile of them and their family members. With a view to overcome the social isolation and reduce the dependence on the welfare system, the persons of working age will be directed primarily towards measures for supporting their inclusion in employment and improving their skills. The older people will be directed to appropriate social and healthcare services and the people with disabilities will be provided with adequate socio-economic support. Feedback on the results achieved for each targeted user will be reported back, where applicable.
- Provision of accompanying measures within the programme-provided assistance that will be the connecting element between the other national measures and those funded with EU resources.
- Complementarity with the policy for provision of social benefits in the country. Besides the financial resources provided under the national legislation for social assistance, the material support provided under the programme will ensure a relatively high standard of living of people living at risk of poverty and social exclusion, which will help to improve their social inclusion.

***Operation selection criteria<sup>9</sup>***

*Text field [4,000 characters]*

The assistance will be implemented by two interrelated procedures - for purchasing and distributing the food and/or hygiene materials purchased.

The food products and the hygiene materials will be purchased by the Agency for the Social Assistance through a specified administrative structure, in compliance with the applicable rules on public procurement. This will ensure that people under equal conditions will receive the relevant assistance at the same time throughout the country. A contract will be entered into force with the selected contractor(s). The food products will be supplied by the contractor to warehouses of the contracting authority or to warehouses of the beneficiary/ies selected to distribute them. The characteristics of the storage premises should comply with the requirements for safe storage of the food products and the hygiene materials.

<sup>9</sup> Only for programmes limited to a specific objective as set out in Article 4 (1) (xi) c) (vii) of the ESF+ Regulation.

The food products and the hygiene materials will be distributed to the supported end recipients by selected beneficiary/ies. The beneficiary/ies will provide accompanying measures to the end users directly or in partnership with other organisations. The distribution of the packages of food and hygiene products, in the case of justified need, may also be performed by the structures of the Agency for Social Assistance locally, provided that the eligibility criteria for both the operation and the beneficiary as set out in the programme are met.

Based on data from the ASA on social benefits granted, it is expected that the packages purchased will reach about 530 000 people in need. These individuals are part of families with varying numbers of members, with one-, two- and three-person families predominating. About 10% of the total number of persons are in families with four or more members and a differentiated approach will be applied to them in terms of quantity of products and, if applicable, in terms of content.

**The operations are eligible if:**

- They are consistent with the programme and ensure effective contribution to achieving the programme-specific objectives;
- They are implemented by an eligible beneficiary and are paid for the implementation of operations between the date of submitting the programme to the Commission or 1 January 2021, whichever is earlier, and 31 December 2029.
- The assistance is provided by respecting the dignity and preventing the stigmatisation of the most deprived.
- They are consistent with the principles set out in the requirements of the national legislation in the area of public procurement, where applicable.
- They fall within the available budget and have clear and realistic quantitative outputs.
- They are consistent with the horizontal policies by ensuring gender equality and taking into account the provisions of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the EU principle of sustainable development in the field of environment in accordance with Article 11 and Article 191 (1) of the TFEU.

**Specific criteria for selection of beneficiary/ies to distribute the food and/or hygiene materials purchased:**

- An institution, a public body or non-profit organization registered under the Act on the Non-profit Legal Entities as a non-profit legal entity of public benefit, which have been operating and actively pursuing its objectives for not less than two years; that has proven experience of at least 1 year from the deadline for submitting applications for participation in the procedure relating to the provision of assistance in kind and/or associated with the distribution of food to the population.
- The beneficiary/ies should provide full national coverage - alone or in partnership, as well as simultaneity of distribution - in the same period for all identified representatives of the target groups in terms of both the food packages, and the packages of sanitary hygiene products.
- Availability of capacity, alone or in partnership, to analyse the needs of the representatives of the target groups and the corresponding provision of accompanying measures.



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### ***HOT LUNCH support type***

*Text field [2,000 characters]-*

Hot lunch assistance aims to provide healthy, varied and nutritious food to people who are unable to afford it neither to rely on their relatives' help. The structured survey of end-users highlighted the high added value of hot lunch support for a more dignified life, especially for the elderly over 65 years, who represent 64.4% of the total number of end-users. Just over a fifth (21.5%) were users aged between 50 and 64, and 12.5% were aged between 25 and 49. Only 1.3% are users from the youngest group - between 16 and 24 years. The survey showed that hot lunch users rely on this assistance on a daily basis and are highly dependent on it. Hot lunch for the poorest and most deprived persons will be provided all year round in response to identified persistent and/or urgent needs. The service will also reach more remote places where people have even greater difficulties in securing their livelihoods. Equal territorial coverage will be achieved and people in need in identical social situations will have equal access to the service regardless of where they live. In addition to the provision of hot lunch, accompanying measures will be provided corresponding to the needs of the representatives of the target groups. The aim is to support and direct the end recipients towards poverty eradication and overcoming social isolation measures, wherever possible. Complementarity will be sought with measures implemented at local level with municipal, national or European funds. Given the different profiles and ages of the persons of the target groups subject to support, the specific accompanying measures to be implemented for each person will be determined at the level of implementation of a project based on an individual assessment of the needs.

### ***Main target groups***

*Text field [2,000 characters]*

Hot lunch will be provided as a priority to people who need daily support. They will be determined within the range of people who receive monthly or targeted support on various legal grounds; people with self-service difficulties; people whose income does not exceed the poverty line set for the country, homeless people. Subject of assistance may also be persons who get into difficulty as a result of natural disasters, pandemics and others, force majeure in order to contain any emergency situations. The leading criterion is the degree of vulnerability and deprivation identified by the local social welfare authority. The frequency of support will allow for continued and systematic contact with persons in need, which in turn will also extend the possibilities of providing accompanying support as needed, including provision of complementary support with other measures under the programme, where necessary. Flexibility will be given to ensure that support is provided in the required volume, quantity and frequency when urgent and immediate needs are identified. The terms and conditions for access to the programme will be determined by an Ordinance of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, which will define the main target group, as well as an additional target group to which unclaimed or undistributed lunches will be redistributed. The affiliation of the identified persons to the eligible target group will be confirmed by the respective Social Assistance Directorate by a procedure and under conditions approved in the Ordinance, on the basis of the registers of the assisted persons, verification, collection of additional information, individual assessment, etc. on a case-by-case basis. Based on annual data from the ASA on the number of persons and families receiving monthly social benefits on various grounds, it is expected that more than 50 000 needy persons will receive a hot lunch during the implementation period. In the case of a change in the national legislation regarding the scope and adequacy of the support

provided, these changes will also be taken into account when defining the target groups for support.

### ***Decryption of the national or regional schemes of support***

*Text field [2,000 characters]-*

The provision of a hot lunch will be complemented by individually targeted accompanying support measures which will indicatively consist of counselling, assistance and referral of those most in need to:

- use of other social services provided in the municipality, including those funded by ESF+, such as patronage care;

- use of municipal services, the provision of temporary shelter for homeless people, support to access health and education services, family budget management, healthy and balanced nutrition, or other forms of support. Accompanying support will be a linking element that will ensure complementarity with other programmes implemented by municipalities or social service providers to render the necessary assistance and long term support. At the same time, where there is no developed network of support services, following an analysis of the profile of the persons covered and the available resources of the municipality, opportunities will be sought for the programming of targeted support measures funded by ESF+. A mechanism will be implemented for the identification, support and follow-up of persons in need, who through accompanying measures are directed to the most appropriate social support measures. The measure will complement the activities implemented under the Public Canteens targeted programme of the **Social Protection Fund**. In order to ensure complementarity, The Fund will finance renovation of the premises and the equipment for food preparation, in particular at places where the equipment for the implementation of such activities is missing or obsolete.

Given the financing mechanism of the **Social Protection Fund** and the annual determination of the parameters of its support, the complementarity between the two instruments will be defined at the level of guidelines for applicant procedure and will be monitored at the level of implementation. Double assistance with hot lunch from different sources at the same time will not be allowed. That is the main requirement to be monitored under the Food and Basic Material support program 2021-2027.

### ***Operation selection criteria<sup>10</sup>***

*Text field [4,000 characters]*

The support will be implemented as a continuation of the partnership with municipalities established under the FEAD, which will ensure the national coverage of the measure. Long-term contracts for provision of hot lunch to the persons of the target groups will be signed with municipalities and districts of municipalities on the territory of the country. Pursuant to the Social Services Act, municipalities as public entities are the main provider of social services in the country and only they can assign the provision of social services to private providers of social services. As local government bodies, municipalities are responsible for the analysis of needs, the implementation of policies for the provision of social services, as well as for their organisation and management. In this way, the hot lunch activities will become part of the

<sup>10</sup> Only for programmes limited to a specific objective as set out in Article 4 (1) (xi) c) (vii) of the ESF+ Regulation.

targeted social policy that municipalities develop to support people living in material deprivation and at risk of social exclusion. The legal possibilities that municipalities have to assign the service will also be used in the implementation of the operation, thus creating conditions for fresh food to be provided on equal terms throughout the country. The beneficiaries should ensure that they provide a full and varied weekly menu in accordance with the generally accepted recipe norms in the country, subject to compliance with the food safety requirements. In order to reduce the administrative burden in the implementation of the grant contracts, the Managing Authority will apply simplified reimbursement rules based on the unit cost per product hot lunch.-.e

**The operations are eligible if:**

- They are consistent with the programme and ensure effective contribution to achieving the programme-specific objectives;
- They are implemented by an eligible beneficiary and are paid for the implementation of operations between the date of submitting the programme to the Commission or 1 January 2021, whichever is earlier, and 31 December 2029;
- They provide for mechanisms to avoid food waste;
- The assistance is provided by respecting the dignity and preventing the stigmatisation of the most deprived.
- They fall within the available budget and have clear and realistic quantitative outputs.
- They are consistent with the horizontal policies by ensuring gender equality and taking into account the provisions of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the EU principle of sustainable development in the field of environment in accordance with Article 11 and Article 191 (1) of the TFEU.

**Specific criteria for selection of beneficiaries:**

- Municipalities or districts of municipalities on the territory of Bulgaria
- The beneficiaries should have or use on a relevant legal basis, appropriate facilities and equipment for the preparation and distribution of food, including to the homes of end users or homeless and wandering persons;
- Directly or in partnership with a NGO, they have a capacity to analyse the needs of the representatives of the target groups and the corresponding provision of accompanying measures.

***PACKAGES FOR NEWBORN CHILDREN support type***

*Text field [2,000 characters]*

As part of the support to measures for early child development within this type of assistance, packages will be purchased of basic products needed for newborn children from poor and vulnerable families as identified by the social assistance authorities. The contents of the packages will be determined after consultations with experts - specialists in medical care or paediatricians. International experience in this field will be also studied and the views of non-governmental organisations working with this specific target group will be sought. Indicatively, the packages will include baby diapers, wipes, baby cosmetics and other products that are consistent with the basic need and the age of the child. This type of support will be provided at least twice until the age of six months of the child. In addition to the support, follow-up monitoring of the supported families will be carried out, in order to achieve better appropriateness and effectiveness of the assistance.

Accompanying measures will be implemented in addition to the material support, the parents will be directed to support measures, measures to prevent abandonment, family counselling, individual social work, directing to existing social services for support of children and families, etc. The accompanying measures will be provided to individuals or groups, depending on the identified issues and will be indicatively expressed in:

- Targeting to the locally implemented services for early child's development or any other forms of services for formation and development of parenting skills and family counselling and support.
- Provision of information on the matters of reproductive health, contraceptive methods, sexually transmitted diseases and family planning.

The support will be provided at least twice a year, which will allow for monitoring of the cases. This will allow for the identification of specific issues relating to the children's raising that could be promptly communicated to the competent authorities. Individual counselling will be carried out with intensity depending on the case and the group work will be organised around common problems, depending on the group and the focus on the job. Main target groups

*Text field [2,000 characters]*

The support will be targeted as a priority to newborns from poor families who are subject to social assistance. Families at risk of child abandonment, mothers, victims of violence, children placed in foster families, families, users of social services will also be supported. Persons in need will be identified by the social assistance authorities on the basis of the data on the assisted persons and families, the data from the Child Protection Departments, local social service providers and other sources. Individual assessment of needs will be made for each of these persons where the level of material deprivation and the need for such type of assistance will be evaluated along with the income test. The terms and conditions for access to the programme will be determined by a Ordinance of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. The data on the specific recipients of such support will be provided by the Agency for Social Assistance within a procedure and conditions set out in the Ordinance. Packages for about 10,000 children from poor and vulnerable families are expected to be provided. The estimated number of children is determined on the basis of data on the monthly allowances granted for child raising, the date on the cases, on which the Child Protection departments work and the trends in this regard.

In case of a change in the national legislation regarding the scope and adequacy of the support provided, these changes will also be taken into account when defining the target groups for support.

### ***Decryption of the national or regional schemes of support***

*Text field [2,000 characters]*

The provision of packages for newborns and the accompanying support measures will contribute to ensuring children proper and normal development and the improvement of families' capacity to raise them, including using the resources of the environment for the provision of social services of different scope and duration, funded from other sources. Complementarity will also be ensured with ESF+ funded measures focusing on early childhood development support. The effective scope of social assistance provided under national legislation for vulnerable groups will be extended. The programme support will provide a link between social assistance and social services in supporting children and families at local level.

To achieve this, the capacity and resources of the main social service provider in the country - the municipalities - will be used. Pursuant to the Social Services Act, only municipalities have the competence to delegate the provision of social services to licensed providers. In recent years, the social services sector has developed dynamically and the country already has a well-developed network of social services to support children and their families and established successful partnerships between local authorities and the non-governmental sector. This resource will be used to enable children's families to receive integrated and comprehensive support for social inclusion. The material assistance provided will contribute to the identification, support and follow-up of persons in need who have been referred to the most appropriate social support measures.

### ***Operation selection criteria<sup>11</sup>***

*Text field [4,000 characters]*

The products in the package will be purchased by the Agency for Social Assistance in compliance with the applicable rules for public procurement and will be directed to warehouses for storage and subsequent distribution to the families of the newborns.

#### **The operations are eligible if:**

- They are consistent with the programme and ensure effective contribution to achieving the programme-specific objectives;
- They are implemented by an eligible beneficiary and are paid for the implementation of operations between the date of submitting the programme to the Commission or 1 January 2021, whichever is earlier, and 31 December 2029;
- The assistance is provided by respecting the dignity and preventing the stigmatisation of the most deprived.
- They are consistent with the principles set out in the requirements of the national legislation in the area of public procurement.
- They fall within the available budget and have clear and realistic quantitative outputs.
- They are consistent with the horizontal policies by ensuring gender equality and taking into account the provisions of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the EU principle of sustainable development in the field of environment in accordance with Article 11 and Article 191 (1) of the TFEU.

The provision of the packages for newborns will be implemented by selected beneficiary/ies who will also implement accompanying measures independently or in a partnership. The provision of the packages for newborns, in the case of a justified need and in view to ensure the national coverage of the assistance, may also be performed by the structures of the Agency for Social Assistance locally, in partnership with the municipalities, provided that the eligibility criteria for both the operation and the beneficiary as set out in the programme are met.

### ***Type of support: BABY/CHILDREN MEALS***

*Text field [2,000 characters] –*

<sup>11</sup> Only for programmes limited to a specific objective as set out in Article 4 (1) (xi) c) (vii) of the ESF+ Regulation.



Poverty, malnutrition, lack of responsive and stimulating care, difficult access to healthcare and early education opportunities, stigma and the effects of prolonged social isolation continue to threaten the development of many children in the country. The investments in the proper nutrition of vulnerable families children will help to overcome issues related to poverty.

The NSI data show that in 2019, 27.5% of children aged 0-17 in Bulgaria are at risk of poverty, or 0.9 percentage points more than in 2018. The level of material deprivation among children also remains stable compared to previous years. In 2019, the relative percentage of **children with material deprivation** (of at least one of 13 indicators) was 39.9% and for 4.6% of the children not a single need could be satisfied due to financial reasons (restrictions on all the 13 indicators). In 2019, 40.6% of the children experiencing material deprivation live also at risk of poverty. This disturbing statistic justifies the need of comprehensive integrated solutions to support children from an early age and their families, in order to reduce the transmission of intergenerational poverty. This type of support is aimed at ensuring healthy and proper nutrition for children at very early age. Conditions for providing specific nutrition to children aged 10 months to 3 years are available in all districts in the country, which will enable a wide territorial coverage of the support. Vouchers / cards / for baby/children meals will be provided. The social assistance authorities will be involved in the implementation of the assistance and will identify the children most in need, carry out an individual needs assessment, including in relation to their families, and make recommendations for referral to appropriate services provided in the territory. The provision of food and accompanying support will be implemented in partnership with the municipalities. As a result, children and families at risk will be reached and followed up at an early stage.

#### *Main target groups*

##### *Text field [2,000 characters]*

The focus will be on children of up to 3 years old subject to social assistance - children of low income households, children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children living in poor housing conditions, children at risk of abandonment, etc. that are not otherwise provided with food. At the same time it will be possible to identify children and families who remain outside the scope of the social assistance system, but for whom the need for such assistance has been identified. The identification of the needy persons will be done by the structures of the Agency Social Assistance on the basis of a needs assessment. For children who are in need of such support, a voucher/card for children meal will be provided, In addition, for each child or family specific recommendations for referring to existing municipal services will be made. The partner municipalities will mediate for inclusion in the recommended services. A mechanism for receiving feedback from partner municipalities on the results of the accompanying support will be applied. The terms and conditions for access to the programme will be set out in a Ordinance of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. By providing nutritious meals, each individual case will be followed up and appropriate, tailored support will be provided to both the child and his/her family. At the same time, the partnership with the municipalities will guarantee the maximum use of the resources in terms of the provided services. More than 10,000 children of age from 10 months to three years old are expected to be supported with healthy food. The estimated number of children is determined on the basis of the data on the supported persons, the data on the cases on which the Child Protection departments work and the expected trends in the provision of social benefits for children and families at risk.

In case of a change in the national legislation regarding the scope and adequacy of the support provided, these changes will also be taken into account when defining the target groups for support.

The specific representatives of the target group will be defined by an Ordinance of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy.

### ***Decryption of the national or regional schemes of support***

*Text field [2,000 characters]*

According to data of the National Association of the Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, baby meals centres function in 134 municipalities that provide food to **25 500 children** in total. With the support of the programme, the number of children receiving quality and nutritious food will be increased. The food provision to the children will be a connecting element to the locally implemented complex measures for support and development of parenting skills, family counselling and support and wherever possible, for finding a job as a way to overcome poverty, isolation and the dependence on the social assistance system. The support will be implemented in partnership with the municipalities, which are the main providers of social services in the country according to the Social Services Act. At the same time, baby meals centres are separate units within the municipality. This approach will guarantee full coverage of the families in need and maximum use of the resources of the environment to provide adequate support. The support will complement national measures to reduce child poverty and investment in early childhood development. The measure will expand the effective scope of social and family benefits, as to a greater extent the group that will benefit from it are individuals and families subject to various forms of social and family assistance. The provided child food support will release funds from family budget and thus allowing to meet other basic needs.

The measure complements the established integrated services for early childhood development under the Social Inclusion Project (financed with Loan 7612BG from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development in the period 2008-2015) and subsequently financed under the Operational Program "Human Resources development" 2014-2020 by referring specific individuals to OP measures.

The partnership between the key social assistance authorities and the services delivery will also serve to better plan long term targeted measures to tackle poverty and its consequences, where possible.

### ***Operation selection criteria<sup>12</sup>***

**Text field [4,000 characters]**

**The operations are eligible if:**

- They are consistent with the programme and ensure effective contribution to achieving the programme-specific objectives;

<sup>12</sup> Only for programmes limited to a specific objective as set out in Article 4 (1) (xi) c) (vii) of the ESF+ Regulation.

- They are implemented by an eligible beneficiary and are paid for the implementation of operations between the date of submitting the programme to the Commission or 1 January 2021, whichever is earlier, and 31 December 2029;
- The assistance is provided by respecting the dignity and preventing the stigmatisation of the most deprived.
- Partnership involving all stakeholders. The active involvement of all stakeholders, including the target groups, is of particular importance for the effective and quality implementation of each project.
- They are consistent with the principles set out in the requirements of the national legislation in the area of public procurement.
- They are within the available budget and have clear and realistic quantitative outcome, consistent with the horizontal policies by ensuring gender equality and taking into account the provisions of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the EU principle of sustainable development in the field of environment in accordance with Article 11 and Article 191 (1) of the TFEU.

The operation will be implemented by the Agency for Social Assistance through its territorial structures in partnership with the municipalities in the country. The choice of this approach is based on the legally regulated role of the agency to be a social assistance and child protection body. A database of assisted persons and families is available in the Agency and due to its functional role all needy people turn for help to its territorial structures. This will ensure that the assistance reaches the most needy children. The partnership with the municipalities will ensure a wide and even scope of the activity, national coverage and better coordination between all supporting activities and services at the local level with a focus on early childhood development.

The Agency for Social Assistance functions are connected to identification of the persons in need - children, aged from 10 months to 3 years of age from the eligible target groups who are not provided with food otherwise needs assessment and recommendations for providing accompanying support - both for the child and his family; providing a voucher / card / for a meal for the children for whom the need for such support has been established; data analysis, reporting, internal monitoring and financial transfers to municipalities based on reported vouchers / cards.

The grant procedure for inclusion of the municipalities as partners in the operation will be open throughout the whole implementation period.

**Eligible to be included municipalities should:**

- have a capacity to provide meal for children from 10 months to 3 years of age
- have access to adequate facilities and equipment in accordance with the applicable law
- have developed social services at local level, including those established or operating with ESF + funds

The partners will provide the children with a variety of food, meeting the qualitative composition and technological processing applicable to children's age and in accordance with the national requirements for child nutrition. In addition to the provision of food, the partners will facilitate the provision of social services in accordance with the individual recommendations for each case. This organization of activities will ensure that a child is not allowed to receive double assistance from different sources, as both the ASA and the municipalities are directly involved in the provision of support and social services and have the necessary information for carrying out inspections. In order to reduce the administrative burden

in the implementation of the grant contracts, the Managing Authority will develop and apply a methodology for simplified reimbursement rules based on the unit cost per product - a meal prepared by a baby meals centre. In order to reduce the administrative burden in the implementation of the measure, a value will be set for a voucher/card for a baby meal thus providing a healthy and nutritious meal per child per day.

## **2.T. PRIORITY 3 – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

### ***2.B.1 Priority for technical assistance pursuant to Article 30(4) (repeated for each such a TA priority)***

*Reference: Article 17(3)(e); Article 29, Article 30, Article 31, Article 89 CPR;*

*Description of technical assistance under flat rate payments – Article 30*

#### ***Text field [5 000]***

The priority will support the successful implementation of the programme, by supporting the programme planning, implementation, monitoring, control and evaluation, the programme publicity, including the contribution of the Funds as well as the enhancement of the administrative capacity of the MA and the beneficiaries.

The technical assistance within the programme will provide the necessary support to the programme management and for the introduction of good practices and approaches in the programme planning, management, implementation, monitoring, control and evaluation as well as for measures for communication and publicity, exchange of experience and building of an expert and motivated human resource. All activities related to the effective administration of the programme should be compliant with the provisions of the Common Provisions Regulation (EU). The activities are defined on the basis of the experience gained in 2014-2020 period.

Part of the funds under the priority will be directed to the provision of trainings for potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries with approved projects. The purpose of the trainings is to improve their capacity in terms of the project implementation cycle by taking into account the lessons learned in the 2014-2020 period (best practices, weaknesses and errors).

Another part of the funds will be used for training of the Managing Authority related to the programme management and implementation, including in the form of specialised training courses, exchange of experience. These trainings will help to improve the knowledge and expertise to manage the programme.

As a result of the interventions, greater public awareness will be sought both in terms of the progress made in the implementation of the programme as a whole and of the results achieved by the projects. In addition, the beneficiaries will be informed for the funding opportunities. Communication of the EU funds will be ensured amongst the general public by providing information on the main aspects related to the programme implementation.

The communication channels that will mainly be used, the mass media, which are permanently retained as the most used, most effective and most preferred channels of information about the programme, and the Internet as a whole is the third most frequently mentioned communication channel.

In order to achieve the objectives and the results of the programme, the technical assistance will be used for the following indicative activities:

1. Ensuring good management, monitoring and control of the programme. The investments will provide adequate systems, including IT, working environment and expert and motivated human resources, and will ultimately achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness of the management and quality management of the funds of the programme.
2. To improve the capacity of beneficiaries related to the management of resources from the Fund. They should be well trained, informed and aware, including having adequate systems and a working environment to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of the activities.
3. For technical provision of annual review meetings.
4. For travel and accommodation, in connection with the exchange of information and the introduction of good practices and approaches in the programming, implementation, monitoring, control and evaluation of the programme, this will contribute to better administrative management and will indirectly have a positive impact on the development of the activities included in the programme.
5. Given the specificities of the programme, monitoring activities will be financed with regard to the quality and safety of the support provided under the programme. In this regard, it will also be necessary to finance trainings of employees working in structures with management and control functions that are necessary due to the specificities of the controls carried out. The enhancement of staff capacity will lead to more efficient operation and better performance in the implementation of all MA functions.
6. Carrying out studies, preparation of expert reports, analyses, tests and evaluations related to programme management, as well as hiring external methodological and expert assistance to improve the management and implementation of the programme, including for similar activities related to previous and subsequent programming periods.
7. Collection, aggregation and analysis of information and statistics, preparation of opinions, reports and documents, conducting research and carrying out other activities to support the programming of EU funds in the next programming period;
8. Provision of the necessary facilities and technical equipment and information systems for the management and implementation of the programme, if necessary.
9. Investments will be made in activities to raise the information awareness of the target groups, the beneficiaries and other stakeholders with regard to the programme, as well as to improve the opportunities for the dissemination of the programme results and impact.

**Main target groups:**

- Employees of the Managing Authority
- Program-specific target groups
- The general public
- Potential beneficiaries
- Beneficiaries



-Local and regional administration, institutions, Managing authorities, journalists, representatives of the non-governmental sector and relevant authorities

## 2.B.1.2.Indicators

Output indicators with the corresponding milestones and targets

*Reference: Article 17(3)(e)bis(ii) CPR*

Table 2: Output indicators							
Priority	Fund	Category of region	ID [5]	Indicator [255]	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)

## 2.B.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

*Reference Article 17(3)(e)bis(iv) CPR*

Table 4: Dimension 1 – Intervention field				
Priority №	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 7: Dimension 6 — ESF+ secondary themes				
Priority №	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 8: Dimension 7 - ESF <sup>13</sup> , ERDF, CF and JTF gender equality dimension					
Priority No	Fund	Category of region	Specific objective	Code (02 or 01 or 00)	Amount (EUR)

### 3. Financial plan

Reference: Article 17(3)(f)(i)-(iii); Article 106(1)-(3), Article 10; Article 21; CPR

#### 3.A Transfers and contributions<sup>14</sup> NOT APPLICABLE

Reference: Article 10; Article 21; CPR and Article 21a, CPR

Programme amendment related to	<input type="checkbox"/> contribution to InvestEU
	<input type="checkbox"/> transfer to instruments under direct or indirect management
	<input type="checkbox"/> transfer between ERDF, ESF+, Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds

Table 15A: Contributions to InvestEU \* (breakdown by year) - **NOT APPLICABLE**

Contribution from		Contribution to	Breakdown by year							
Fund	Category of region	InvestEU window(s)	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
ERDF	More developed									
	Transition									
	Less developed									
ESF+	More developed									
	Transition									
	Less developed									
CF	N/A									
EMFAF	N/A									

\* For each new request for contribution, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts transferred for each year by Fund and by category of region.

Table 15B: Contributions	Category of regions	Window 1 Sustainable Infrastructure	Window 2 Innovation and Digitisation	Window 3 SME	Window 4 Social Investment and Skills	Total
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<sup>13</sup> In principle, 40% for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100% is applicable when Member State chooses to use article 6(2), ESF+ as well as programme specific actions in gender equality

<sup>14</sup> Applicable only for amendments to the programs, in accordance with Articles 10 and 21 of the CPR except complementary transfers to the JTF in line with Article 21a. Transfers shall not affect the annual breakdown of financial appropriations at the MFF level for a Member State..

to InvestEU* (summary)		(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(f)=(a)+(b)+(c)+(d)
ERDF	More developed					
	Less developed					
	Transition					
ESF+	More developed					
	Less developed					
	Transition					
CF						
EMFAF						
Total						

**Table 16A: Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management\* (breakdown by year)- NOT APPLICABLE**

Transfer from		Transfer to	Breakdown by year									
Fund	Category of region	Instrument	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026		2027		Total
								Financial appropriation without flexibility amount	Flexibility amount	Financial appropriation without flexibility amount	Flexibility amount	
ERDF	More developed											
	Transition											
	Less developed											
ESF+	More developed											
	Transition											
	Less developed											
CF	N/A											
EMFAF	N/A											

**Table 16A: Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management\* (summary)**

Fund	Category of region	Instrument 1 (a)	Instrument 2 (b)	Instrument 3 (c)	Instrument 4 (d)	Instrument 5* (e)	Total (f)=(a)+(b)+(c)+(d)+(e)
ERDF	More developed regions						
	Transition						
	Less developed regions						
	Outermost and northern sparsely populated regions						
ESF+	More developed regions						
	Transition						
	Less developed regions						
	Outermost regions						
CF							
EMFF							
Total							

**Table 17A: Transfers between ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds \*  
(breakdown by year)**

Transfers from		Transfers to		Breakdown by year									
Fund	Category of region	Fund	Category of region (where relevant)	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026		2027		Total
									Financial appropriation without	Flexibility amount	Financial appropriation without	Flexibility amount	

									flexibility amount		flexibility amount		
ERDF	More developed	ERDF, ESF+ or CF, EMFA F, AMF, ISF, BMVI											
	Transition												
	Less developed												
ESF+	More developed												
	Transition												
	Less developed												
CF	N/A												
EMFA F	N/A												

**Table 17B: Transfers between ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds\* (summary) - NOT APPLICABLE**

		ERDF				ESF+				CF	EMFF	AMF	ISF	BMVI	Total
		More developed regions	Transition	Less developed regions	Outermost and northern sparsely populated regions	More developed regions	Transition	Less developed regions	Outermost regions						
<b>ERDF</b>	More developed regions														
	Transition														
	Less developed regions														
	Outermost and northern sparsely populated regions														
<b>ESF+</b>	More developed regions														
	Transition														
	Less developed regions														
	Outermost regions														
<b>CF</b>															
<b>EMFAF</b>															
<b>Total</b>															

\* Cumulative amounts for all transfers done through programme amendments during the programming period. With each new request for transfer, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts transferred for each year by Fund and by category of region



### 3.1 Financial appropriations by year

Reference: Article 17(3)(f)(i) and Article 3, 3a and 3d JTF

Table 10: Financial appropriations by year													
Fund	Category of region	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026		2026 for EMFAF only	2027		2027 for EMFAF only	Total
							Financial appropriation without flexibility amount	Flexibility amount		Financial appropriation without flexibility amount	Flexibility amount		
ERDF*	More developed												
	Transition												
	Less developed												
	Outermost and northern sparsely populated												

Total													
ESF+*	Less developed	21236074	21660796	22094012	22535892	22986610	23446342			23915273			157 87
	More developed												
	Transition	4247215	4332159	4418802	4507178	4597322	4689268			4783055			31 575
	Outermost and northern sparsely populated												
<b>Total</b>			25 483 289	25 992 955	26 512 815	27 043 071	27 583 932	28 135 611			28 698 328		189450
<b>JTF*</b>	<b>Article 3 JTF resources</b>												
	<b>Article 3a resources</b>												
	<b>Article 3d JTF resources</b>												

	(related to Article 3 JTF resources)													
	Article 3d JTF resources (related to Article 3a JTF resources)													
Total			25 483 289	25 992 955	26 512 815	27 043 071	27 583 932	28 135 611			28 698 328			189450
Cohesion Fund	N	<u>N/A</u>												
EMFAF	N	<u>N/A</u>												
Total			25 483 289	25 992 955	26 512 815	27 043 071	27 583 932	28 135 611			28 698 328			189450

### 3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing<sup>1</sup>

Reference: Article 17(3)(f)(ii), Article 17(6)

For programmes under the Investment for Jobs and Growth goal where technical assistance in accordance with Article 30(4) was chosen in the Partnership Agreement.

Policy/ JTF specific objective No or TA	Priority	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	Fund	Category of region*	Union contribution (a) = (g)+(h)	Breakdown of Union contribution		National contribution  (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of national contribution		Total  (e)=(a)+(b)	Co- finan- cing rate  (f)=(a) /(e)* *
						Union contrib- ution less the flexibilit- y amount (g)	Flexibi- lity amount t (h)		public (c)	private (d)		
	Priority 1		ESF+	More developed								
				Transition	30 000 000			3 333 333	3 333 333		33 333 333	0.90
				Less developed	150 000 000			16 666 667	16 666 667		166 666 667	0.90
				Outermost and								

<sup>1</sup> Prior to the 2025 mid-term review for the ERDF, ESF+ and CF, financial appropriations for the period 2021-2025 only.

				northern sparsely populated								
	Priority 2		ESF+	More developed								
				Transition								
				Less developed								
				Outermost and northern sparsely populated								
			JTF** Article 3, resources									
			Article 3a resources									
			CF									
TA	Priority 3 TA pursuant to Article 30(4)		ERDF or ESF+ or JTF or CF		9 450 000			1 050 000	1 050 000		10 500 000	0.90
TA	TA pursuant to Article 32		ERDF or ESF+ or JTF or CF									
			Total ERDF	More developed								
				Transition								
				Less developed								
				Outermost and northern sparsely populated								

		<b>Total ESF+</b>		More developed								
				Transition								
				Less developed								
				Outermost and northern sparsely populated								
		<b>JTF**</b>	<b>Article 3 resources</b>									
			<b>Article 3a resources</b>									
		<b>Total CF</b>										
		<b>Grand total</b>			189 450 000			21 050 000	21 050 000		210 500 000	0.90

\* For ERDF: less developed, transition, more developed, and, where applicable special allocation for outermost and northern sparsely populated regions. For ESF+: less developed, transition, more developed and, where applicable, additional allocation for outermost regions. For CF: not applicable. For technical assistance, application of categories of region depends on selection of a fund.

\*\* Indicate the total JTF resources, including the complementary support transferred from the ERDF and the ESF+. The table shall not include the amounts in accordance to Article 3d, JTF. In case of technical assistance financed from the JTF, the JTF resources should be split into resources related to Article 3 and 3a, JTF.



**1. Enabling conditions**

*Reference: Article 17(3)(h)*

Table 12: Enabling confitions							
Enabling conditions	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification

## 5. Programme authorities

Reference: Article 17(3)(j); Article 65, Article 78 CPR

Table 13: Programme authorities			
Programme authorities	Name of the institution [500]	Contact name [200]	E-mail [200]
Managing authority	International Cooperation, Programmes and European Integration Directorate at the Social Assistance Agency	Milena Encheva, Head of International Cooperation, Programmes and European Integration Directorate at the Social Assistance Agency	<a href="mailto:m.encheva@asp.government.bg">m.encheva@asp.government.bg</a>
Audit authority	Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency	Ludmila Rangelova – Executive director	<a href="mailto:aeuf@minfin.bg">aeuf@minfin.bg</a>
Body which receives payments from the Commission	National Fund Directorate at the Ministry of Finance	Manuela Milosheva – Director of National Fund Directorate at the Ministry of Finance	<a href="mailto:natfund@minfin.bg">natfund@minfin.bg</a>
Accounting functions in case that this function is assigned to a structure other than the MA	National Fund Directorate at the Ministry of Finance	Manuela Milosheva – Director of National Fund Directorate at the Ministry of Finance	<a href="mailto:natfund@minfin.bg">natfund@minfin.bg</a>

## 6. Partnership

Reference: Article 17(3)(g)

<p><i>Text field [10 000]</i></p> <p>The policy of partnership and involvement of all stakeholders is one of the fundamental principles in the implementation of the policies of the European Union. The partnership supposes collaboration, involvement and dialogue of all stakeholders at national, regional and local level.</p> <p>By Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 196 of 11 April 2019 approving the analysis of the socio-economic development of Bulgaria 2007-2017 to define the national priorities for the period 2021-2027, a list of the policy objectives to be supported during the program period 2021-2027, and a list of programmes and a leading institution for their development an Indicative List of programmes and leading institutions for development of each programme for the programming period 2021-2027 was approved.</p> <p>The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in its capacity of a leading institution, according to Decision No. 196 of 11.04.2019 and directly responsible for developing and implementing the policies in the field of social inclusion and combating poverty, has been designated to develop and approved, in compliance with the procedure set out in Decision No. 142/2019, the drafts of</p>
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two operational programmes - Human Resource Development Programme and Programme for Food and Basic Material Support for the 2021-2027 programming period. In view to optimise the work on the development of the programme documents and to reduce the administrative burden, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy set up a common thematic working group with a mandate to develop and propose both programmes for approval.

The approach to establish a common thematic working group ensures complementarity, consistency and more significant performance of the measures intended to overcome the material deprivation, reducing the poverty and the support for social inclusion of vulnerable groups of persons.

The composition of the thematic working group for the development of the programmes for the 2021-2027 programming period was defined pursuant to Art. 7 (4) of RCM No. 142/2019.

In accordance with the measures to be financed under the two programmes, the TWG was composed of representatives of a wide range of stakeholders at national, regional and local level, representatives of public authorities, socio-economic partners, employers, NGOs and organisations promoting social inclusion, fundamental rights, gender equality, non-discrimination and the rights of persons with disabilities, in conformity with their competences within the scope of the programme.

The programme elaboration is implemented by taking into account the positions of the partners and subject to agreement on the individual measures contemplated. The meetings are held under a clear organisation, in compliance with the Internal Rules adopted by the TWG with regard to its operations. The materials for each meeting are distributed in advance, by giving the TWG members and their substitutes the necessary time and information for preparing competent opinions on the examined materials. In order to inform the general public about the process of the programme elaboration, the minutes from the meetings and the materials of the individual stages of preparation of the programme are published on the Internet page of the Agency for Social Assistance.

Following the principle of broad representation and partnership, in compliance with the anti-epidemic measures, online public consultations on the programme were organised in four sessions between 13 and 15 October 2020, respectively with socio-economic partners, municipal authorities, NGOs and businesses. The discussions enjoyed great interest and participation.

The National Association of the Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria played an active role in the programme preparation in its capacity as a defender of the interests of local authorities, according to organisation's legal powers. At the initiative of the NAMRB, in collaboration with the MA, a survey was conducted among the municipalities in terms of determining the scope of the programme and the types of assistance. As a result, the most priority and useful forms of support under the programme were identified.

At the political level, coordination in the development of the programme takes place within the Coordination Council for Management of EU Funds (CCMEUF). Cooperation with the EC, Directorate General for Employment, Equal Opportunities and Inclusion is carried out at the operational level. Formal and informal consultations have been held with the EC services during the preparation of the programme.

The application of the partnership principle as a key element of good programme management is a guiding principle that the Managing Authority will apply at all stages of the implementation of the envisaged measures.

Following the principle of partnership, a mechanism will be ensured for the exchange of experience and knowledge between different stakeholders throughout the implementation of the operations. This will enable a flexible approach to solving emerging problems and ensure that the approaches chosen to assist the neediest in the country are most relevant to their actual needs. The Managing Authority of the programme will participate with its representatives in the Monitoring Committee of the Human Resources Development Programme, whereby the established practice of joint action planning and complementarity will continue during the implementation of the programme, in the context of broad stakeholder participation.

## 7. Communication and visibility

*Reference: Article 17 (3) (i), Article 42 (2), CPR*

*Text field [4 500]*

Pursuant to Art. 44 of the Regulation laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund +, the Cohesion Fund, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, as well as financial rules for them and the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border and Visa Management Instrument, the Managing Authority of the programme ensures the implementation of publicity measures in order to focus on communication, transparency and visualisation.

**The main objective** is to inform the general public and the potential beneficiaries of the opportunities for support provided by the EU through the Food and Basic Material Assistance Programme.

**The target groups** that the communication and publicity measures will be directed to will be: representatives of the target groups of the programme, potential beneficiaries, the beneficiaries, the general public, staff of the Managing Authority, as well as of other institutions engaged in the programming, management, control and evaluation processes of the programme. The Managing Authority will publish structured information on the selected operations and beneficiaries on the programme's website, taking into account the data protection requirements under Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council. The website will keep up-to-date information on the funding opportunities available and the achievements of the programme.

The managing authority will publish on its website a brief summary of the calls for proposals planned for publication one month before opening a call for proposals at the latest. A communication and public relations coordinator of the programme ("programme communication officer") will be appointed, who will be working to raise the awareness of the general public. A targeted information campaign will be carried out to motivate the beneficiaries to participate in the programme and for clarifications on the application requirements. The communication channels to be used to disseminate the information include (but are not limited to):

- Websites - Programme website, Common information portal, The Information System for Management and Monitoring of EU Funds in Bulgaria - ISMM, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and other appropriate sites
- Electronic media
- Printed media
- Online media and social networks and platforms
- The network of regional information centres
- Direct communication (events, information days, seminars, trainings, etc.);

The information-related activities will be implemented by the MA according to the target groups that should be addressed and to the respective territorial and/or national level. The information and the communication will seek to cover as much of the territory of the country as possible, taking into account the specific needs of the individual target groups and stakeholders. The following indicators will be used to monitor the implementation of the communication and publicity activities:

**Quantitative indicators:**

- ✓ Media presence (number of publications, interviews, reports, media broadcasts, etc.)
- ✓ Number of events (physical and online)
- ✓ Number of participants in events (physical and online)
- ✓ Visits of the programme website

**Qualitative indicator:** measuring the visibility of the EU support with regard to the opportunities provided by the Food and Basic Material Assistance Programme.

The provision of the assistance within the ESF+ support to tackle the material deprivation will be implemented by respecting the dignity and preventing the stigmatisation of the most deprived.

The Managing Authority will publish on the website all assessments of the programme quality.

## 8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

*Reference: Articles 88 and 89 CPR*

**Table 14: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs**

Indication of use of Articles 88 and 89:*	Priority №	Fund	Specific objective (Jobs and growth goal) or area of support (EMFF)
Use of reimbursement of eligible expenditure based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates, under priority in accordance with Article 88, CPR	Hot lunch Baby/Children meal	ESF+	xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion


\* Full information will be provided according to the models annexed to the CPR.

## APPENDICES

- Reimbursement of eligible expenditure based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates (Article 88 CPR)
- Financing not linked to costs (Article 89 CPR)

### ***Appendix 1: Reimbursement of eligible expenditure from the Commission to the Member State based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates***

#### **Template for submitting data for the consideration of the Commission** **(Article 88)**

Date of submitting the proposal	
Current version	1.2



**A. Summary of the main elements**

Priority	Fund	Specific objective (Jobs and growth goal) or area of support (EMFF)	Category of region	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the SCO will be applied in % (estimate)	Type(s) of operation		Corresponding indicator name(s)		Unit of measurement for the indicator	Type of SCO (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Corresponding standard scales of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates (in national currency)
					Code	Description	Code	Description			
<b>Type of support:</b> <b>Hot Lunch</b>	ESF+	xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	<b>Less developed Transition</b>			Provision of hot Lunch		Number of end recipients receiving food support	number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standard scale of unit cost hot lunch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The unit cost - hot lunch - includes a soup, a main course, bread and at least once a week a dessert</li> <li>The 2021 unit cost is set at BGN 2.70 per person per day and is based on national regulation and historical achievement in applying simplified rules under a similar procedure implemented in</li> </ul>

											the 2014-2020 period
<b>Type of support:</b> <b>Baby/Children meal</b>	ESF+	xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion	<b>Less developed Transition</b>			Baby/Children meal		Number of end recipients receiving food support	number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standard scale of unit cost - voucher/ card for a baby meal</li> </ul>	<p>In exchange for a voucher/card for the baby meal, children from the target groups aged 10 months to 3 years will receive a prepared meal, which includes at least a soup, a main course and a dessert.</p> <p>The value of the voucher will be determined by an external contractor</p>

**B.1 Details by type of operation (to be completed for every type of operation)**

**Did the managing authority receive support from an external company to set out the simplified costs below?**

**If so, please specify which external company: No – Name of external company**

Types of operation: Hot Lunch

<p>1.1. Description of the operation type</p>	<p>Hot lunch support aims to provide a healthy, varied and nutritious food for people who are unable to afford it neither to rely on their relatives' help. Hot lunch beneficiaries rely on and are highly dependent on this assistance on a daily basis. "Hot lunch" for the poorest and most deprived is provided all year round in response to identified long-term and/or urgent needs. The service also reaches more remote locations where people experience even greater difficulties in securing their livelihoods.</p> <p>It is envisaged that the operation will be implemented by municipalities and districts of municipalities which, according to national legislation, are the main providers of social services in the country. This makes it possible to achieve equal territorial coverage and to ensure that persons in need in an identical social situation have equal access to the service, regardless of their place of residence.</p> <p>The hot lunch support to people from vulnerable groups has been successfully implemented in the 2014-2020 programming period. In the previous period, in accordance with the approved operational programme, the provision of hot lunches for people from vulnerable groups complements the national programme for funding public canteens implemented through the Social Protection Fund.</p> <p>The value of the expenditure was set in line with the value set for hot lunch under the national programme. During the period of implementation of the operation co-financed by the Fund of European Aid for the most deprived persons, the value of the cost varies in accordance with the national rules..</p> <p>In response to the recommendations of the Audit Directorate of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission and the Executive Agency Audit of EU Funds of 01.05.2017, the Managing Authority has introduced simplified accounting for this activity, based on the approved Methodology for the application of a flat rate per unit of product to simplify the costs of type 3 operation, according to Art. 25 §1, b) of Regulation (EU) No. 223/2014 of the European</p>
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	<p>Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. Along with the introduction of rules to simplify the cost reporting, the MA also increased the value of the cost for a product unit - hot lunch from BGN 2,30 (EUR 1.18) to BGN 2.50 (EUR 1.28) to make the price equal to the food price under the National Programme funded by the Social Protection Fund.</p> <p>In 2020, following the completion of Operation Type 3 "Provision of hot lunch", a national Target Programme for the continuation of activities, funded by the national budget, was launched. The focus of the Target programme was on addressing the impact on the most vulnerable groups of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the purposes of the programme, which ran until 31.12.2020, the cost of a hot lunch per person per day was set at BGN 2.50. From the beginning of 2021, the provision of hot lunches has again started to be financed by the Fund of European Aid for the most deprived persons under the Operational Programme for Food and/or Basic Material Support as a result of the European Commission's initiative to tackle the effects of the crisis through the REACT-EU mechanism. For the purpose of the announced operation, the value per unit of hot lunch product has been increased from BGN 2.50 /EUR 1.28/ to BGN 2.70. / EUR 1.38/, which is still valid.</p> <p>In the current programme, the operation aims to continue the established approach of simplified cost accounting and unit cost reimbursement - lunch</p>
1.2 Priority/specific objective(s) (Jobs and growth goal) or area of support (EMFF) concerned	Addressing material deprivation by providing food and / or basic material support to the most deprived persons, including children, and providing accompanying measures to support their social inclusion.
1.3 Indicator name <sup>16</sup>	Output indicators - lunch
1.3.1 Name of indicator <sup>17</sup>	Result indicator - final recipients
1.4 Unit of measurement for indicator	Total costs and quantity according to APPENDIX III - General indicators for the ESF+ support for overcoming the material deprivation
1.4.1 Unit of measurement for the indicator	Number/age – according to APPENDIX III - General indicators for the ESF+ support for overcoming the material deprivation

<sup>16</sup> Several additional indicators (eg one end product indicator and one result indicator) are possible for one type of operation. In these cases, fields 1.3 to 1.11 should be completed for each indicator.

<sup>17</sup> Several complementary indicators (for instance one output indicator and one result indicator) are possible for one type of operation. In these cases, fields 1.3 to 1.11 should be filled in for each indicator.

1.5 Standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financing based on the cost for a product unit - hot lunch</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
1.6 Amount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The value of the unit cost of product - lunch, including soup, main course, bread and at least once a week dessert is set at BGN 2.70. /EUR 1,38/per person per day.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
1.7 Categories of costs covered by unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	<p>The unit cost defining approach is applied on the basis of performance analysis and monitoring of contracts with identical focus over a period of 36 months. The value is based on national rules and is confirmed by analysis, evaluation and a series of audits carried out on the operations and on the management and control systems of the Managing Authority.</p> <p>The determined cost includes the cost of preparing soup, main meal, bread and at least once a week a dessert for one person per day.</p> <p>For the hot lunch preparation, the beneficiaries shall use, where appropriate, menus from the Recipe Book of catering establishments, which also indicates the quantities of the products used to ensure the quality of the food prepared.</p>
1.8 Do these categories of costs cover all eligible expenditure for the operation? (Y/N)	YES
1.9 Adjustment(s) method	<p>In the course of implementation of the measure, the Managing Authority foresees, if necessary, updating the value of the hot lunch on a triennial basis, in line with inflationary processes and the real economic situation in the country. Historically, the value of hot lunch expenditure allocated to the implementation of national programmes with a similar focus has increased by around 8%. Initially, the determined value of BGN 2.30 / EUR 1.18/ per person per day, in 2017 was increased to BGN 2.50. /EUR 1.28/. In 2021, the value of the expenses is increased to BGN 2.70. /EUR 1,38/ per person per day.</p> <p>The value of BGN 2.70 /EUR 1.38/ will also be applied at the start of the Hot Lunch operation under this programme, with updates on a triennial basis if necessary. The period has been set on the basis of the view that long-term contracts should be concluded with beneficiaries, for a period of no more than 3 years. This correction method was chosen because it is based on historical data,</p>

	it is objective and is easily verifiable. The information for tracking could be found on the website of the National Statistical Institute - <a href="https://www.nsi.bg">https://www.nsi.bg</a>
<p>1.10 Verification of the achievement of the unit of measurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what document(s) will be used to verify the achievement of the unit of measurement?</li> <li>- describe what will be checked during management verifications (including on-the-spot), and by whom.</li> <li>- what arrangements to collect and store the data/documents described?</li> </ul>	<p>In the 2014-2020 programming period, simplified rules of reporting were introduced based on a product unit cost - lunch, in order to ease the way of collecting and aggregating the information on the operation performance indicators.</p> <p>In reporting the expenditures, documents will be primarily required that certify the eligibility of the target groups, their number, their profile, in compliance with the requirements of APPENDIX III - General Indicators of the EFS+ Support to Overcome Material Deprivation and documents certifying that the product - lunch, has been delivered and actually received by the individuals, etc. All necessary documents for verification of expenditure in the conditions of simplified reporting, including those for monitoring of the accompanying measures provided will be specified in details in the Beneficiary's Manual on Operation Contract Implementation and Management. It is envisaged that beneficiary municipalities will continue to report the lunches provided for the period of the relevant request for interim payment. The weights of the lunches received will be used for the indicators under APPENDIX III - General Indicators of the EFS+ Support to Overcome Material Deprivation.</p> <p>In verifying the activities and the expenditures, including those related to ensuring the compliance of the operations with the Union's policies, in addition to the documentary verification of all documents submitted by the beneficiary, the MA carries out mandatory "on-the-spot" controls at the beneficiaries and/or at the places of the project implementation. The "on-the-spot" checks will be planned on a sample basis according to a methodology based on a risk assessment. If necessary, MA performs special "on-the-spot" checks. The checks aimed, on the one hand, to certify that hot lunches are being provided to the most deprived. On the other hand, as a result of the simplified cost accounting rules applied, conditions will be created to focus fully on monitoring the results of the accompanying measures implemented for the persons covered.</p>
1.11 Possible perverse incentives or problems caused by this indicator, how they could be mitigated, and the estimated level of risk	No



1.12 Total amount (national and EU) expected to be reimbursed	<b>BGN 191 567 960</b> EUR 97 947 143
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## **B: Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates**

### **I. Source of data used to calculate the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates (who produced, collected and recorded the data; where the data are stored; cut-off dates; validation, etc.):**

-Review of historical monitoring data on 216 contracts, implemented under the Operational Programme for Food and/or Basic Material Support in the period from the introduction of the simplified rules on 01.05.2017 to the end of the programme on 30.04.2020. As a result of the simplified rules, the territorial scope of the operation has been extended and hot lunch has started to be provided in all districts of the country, including in remote locations. Significantly larger numbers of most deprived persons has been reached. In 2015 there were 8 291 users of the Hot Lunch service, and after the introduction of the simplified reporting rules on 01.05.2017, their number increased sixfold to almost 50 000 persons. The introduction of simplified reporting has significantly reduced the administrative burden for both municipalities and the Managing Authority. The significant reduction of the reporting documents required has enabled the focus of the checks to be placed on the impact of the service on its users. The Managing Authority has implemented procedures to aggregate data on the accompanying measures provided and their impact on end-users. Respecting the basic principles of human rights and dignity, the focus of monitoring is on the needs and demands of the individual and how these are addressed by partner organisations to provide the necessary support to overcome the severe effects of poverty. The process of collecting information is also regulated on the accompanying measures provided under the operations and the degree of satisfaction of the end-users, as well as the aggregation of the data for the respective calendar year. Following the introduction of these procedures in 2017, the results are presented in the corresponding annual reports of the operational programme. Undoubtedly, the simplification introduced under the programme has greatly facilitated the implementation of the activity by the partner organisations - municipalities. This conclusion is confirmed by the independent evaluation of the operational programme, which specifically addressed the question "Does the simplified cost accounting facilitate the implementation of the operations by the partner organisations?". In the current programme, the operation aims to continue the provision of hot lunches to the most vulnerable citizens of the country, while maintaining the established approach of simplified cost accounting and reimbursement on a cost-per-unit basis - lunch. The approach is confirmed by the system audits and audits of operations carried out by the Audit Authority;

- Orders of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy for the annual approval of the targeted programme "Public canteens" financed by the Social Protection Fund from the national budget. The information on the entire period of financing of the public canteens, including the determined value of the hot lunch is available at the following e-mail address: <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/arkhiv>;

- Analysis of historical data and market information, regulatory framework and an actual online survey conducted in relation to the development of a Methodology for the application of simplified rules for reimbursement based on unit cost - hot lunch, in relation to the implementation

of operation type 3 "Provision of hot lunch", co-financed by the Fund of European Aid for the most deprived persons in the period 2014-2020. The analysis was outsourced in 2017 by the Managing Authority of the Operational Programme for Food and/or Basic Material Support 2014-2020. The analysis focuses on two main issues –

1. Administrative burden as a ground for simplified reporting
2. Whether the price set for hot lunch at the time of the survey was sufficient.

The current research questions are addressed through the analysis of detailed quantitative and qualitative comparable information, analysis of dynamics in pricing and consumption of staple food products in the country for the period from 2009 to November 2016. The time period was set due to the national programme for financing public canteens from the Social Protection Fund started in 2009. For the purpose of the analysis, data from a recent report of the National Statistical Institute covering a ten-year period of monitoring of average prices and quantities of staple food purchased by households in Bulgaria were used.

The NSI price measurement methodology is also used in the analysis as the food items analysed are defined according to the homogeneity principle. This allows, based on the information on quantities purchased and their value, to correctly calculate average prices as weighted arithmetic averages. The analysis confirms that a value of BGN 2.50. /EUR 1.28/ per person per day is optimal for quality service provision and recommends periodic updating of the value with the inflation rate.

2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation is relevant to the type of operation:

- reduction of the administrative burden for the contractors under the programme and for the Managing Authority;
- allows for the controls to be focused on the effect of the assistance provided but not on the review of a large number of documents for minimal costs;
- based are on national regulations in the previous programming period;
- they are confirmed by a review of historical data and data provided by the programme monitoring (review of selected indicators);
- confirmed by statistical and market information;

3. Please specify how the calculations were made, in particular including any assumptions made in terms of quality or quantities. Where relevant, statistical evidence and benchmarks should be used and attached to this annex in a format that is usable by the Commission.

The basis for the determination of the unit cost of the hot lunch product are the national rules for the implementation of the national programme for the support of public canteens, funded since 2009 by the national budget through the Social Protection Fund, as well as the target programme "Hot lunch at home in emergency conditions - 2020", also funded by the national budget, in response to the pandemic COVID-19.

In addition, the determined value is confirmed by the analysis commissioned in 2017 by the Managing Authority to determine and justify a standard rate per unit of product - hot lunch, under operation type 3 "Provision of hot lunch", co-financed by the Fund of European Aid for the most deprived persons. For the purpose of the analysis, all regulatory requirements concerning public nutrition, with which

the partner organizations (beneficiaries) comply, have been considered, and the movement of food prices has been analyzed for the period since 2009, when the price of the service was fixed in the national programme.

The approach is confirmed by a review of the historical monitoring data of the operation duly reported in the annual programme implementation reports. When implementing the operation, the partner organisations shall use, as appropriate, the menus from the Recipe Book for catering establishments, which specifies the types and quantities of products used, for standard portion sizes, so as to ensure the quality and variety of the food prepared. This allows for the analysis of qualitatively and quantitatively comparable information, which was used in determining the approach.

4. Please explain how you have ensured that only eligible expenditure was included in the calculation of the standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate.

A hot lunch value consist of soup, main course, bread and at least once a week a dessert. The calculation of the unit cost of hot lunch and of the flat rate includes only the eligible expenditures for the ESF+ support to overcome the material deprivation defined in Article 20 "Eligibility of Expenditure" in the draft ESF+ Regulation..

5. Assessment of the audit authority(ies) of the calculation methodology and amounts and the arrangements to ensure the verification, quality, collection and storage of data.

The reporting procedures and mechanisms introduced are covered by multiple annual audits by the Audit of the EU Funds Executive Agency on both the management and control systems and the specific operation. In 2019, in the consecutive final audit reports from operational audit and from the system assurance audit regarding the efficient functioning of the management and control of the MA of the 2014-2020 Operational Programme for Food and/or Basic Material Assistance, the audit authority did not find any deviations that could be subject to findings and recommendations. The audit authority did not find any errors of systemic nature and therefore believes that the system for management and control of the operational programme functions efficiently and classifies the assessment of the MA management and control systems at the level two on a four-level scale.

## **B.2 Details by type of operation (to be completed for every type of operation)**

**Did the managing authority receive support from an external company to set out the simplified costs below?**

**If so, please specify which external company: YES – Name of external company**

Types of operation: Baby/children meals

1.1. Description of the operation type	Poverty, malnutrition, lack of responsive and stimulating care, difficult access to healthcare and early education opportunities, stigma and the effects of prolonged social isolation continue to threaten the development of many children in the country. The investments in the proper nutrition of vulnerable families children will help to overcome issues related to poverty.
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This disturbing statistics justifies the need of comprehensive integrated solutions to support children from an early age and their families, in order to reduce the transmission of intergenerational poverty. This type of support aims to ensure healthy nutrition for children at a very young age. Conditions for providing specific nutrition to children aged 10 months to 3 years are available in all districts in the country, which will enable wide territorial coverage of the support. The provision of food and accompanying support will be implemented in partnership with the municipalities. In this way, children and families at risk will be reached and followed up at an early stage in order to support them and their families in the social inclusion process. Children will be provided with vouchers / cards against which they will be able to receive prepared food. The activity of baby meal centres in the country is regulated by the Health Act, according to which "baby meal centres are organizationally separate structures where medical and other professionals prepare, store and provide food for children up to three years of age". The activity of the meal centres is subject to a number of regulations aimed at ensuring the variety, quality, quantity and preservation of the food prepared for children so that the final product meets the specificity of the children's organism. Baby meal centres are predominantly separate municipal structures. According to data of the National Association of the Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, baby meals centres function in 134 municipalities that provide food to **25 500 children** in total which includes at least soup, main course and dessert. The operation foreseen under the programme aims to provide healthy meals to children from the identified target groups and in addition to provide children and their families with accompanying support to overcome poverty and social exclusion. In accordance with the children age, feeding in the municipal baby centres is divided by age - for children from 10 months to 1 year and for children from 1 up to 3 years. Each municipality annually determines by a decision of the municipal council the **taxes value** / the value of the food / for the use of the children meals services. The municipalities apply different practices. The budget of the municipality concerned, the cost of the foodstuffs used in the preparation of the meals in accordance with the established national norms and the number of children determine the value of the taxes. In order to achieve the objectives of the operation, to reduce the administrative burden for its implementation and to avoid stigmatisation of children from poor families when receiving food, the Managing Authority will implement a voucher/card support against which the target groups will receive the aid. To this end, an analysis of existing practices and a historical review of the value of food products use for the meal preparation and municipalities' approaches to defined the user taxes will be assigned. On the basis of this analysis, a uniform value will be determined for the food voucher/card for baby meal, including a method for adjusting this

	value. The voucher will provide food for the children for the eligibility period determined under the rules of the procedure.
1.2 Priority/specific objective(s)	addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion
1.3 Indicator name <sup>18</sup>	Output indicator - vouchers/ cards for a baby meal Number of children below 18 years of age receiving food support
1.4 Unit of measurement for indicator	persons
1.5 Standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	Funding on a cost per unit basis - voucher/ card for a baby meal
1.6 Amount	The determination of the value of the baby meal voucher/card, including a verifiable and objective method of updating this value, will be awarded to an external contractor
1.7 Categories of costs covered by unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	A weighted average value of the voucher/card for baby meal valid for the operation will be determined For this purpose, an analysis will be carried out of the existing practices in the municipalities, both in terms of the cost of food products used in the preparation of food and in terms of taxes paid by users of this municipal service
1.8 Do these categories of costs cover all eligible expenditure for the operation? (Y/N)	YES
1.9 Adjustment(s) method	It will be proposed together with the determination of the value of the voucher/card for the baby meal
11.10 Verification of the achievement of the unit of measurement  - what document(s) will be used to verify the achievement of the unit of measurement?  - describe what will be checked during management verifications (including on-the-spot), and by whom.  - what arrangements to collect and store the data/documents described?	The approach to collecting and aggregating information on the operation performance indicators, in the context of support with a voucher/card, will have two main focuses: 1. the data collected must provide assurance that an actual delivery of food has been made against the voucher provided; and 2. follow-up of the results of the implemented accompanying measures, individually recommended for each case Within the scope of the checks, including on-the-spot checks, data will be collected in accordance with ANNEX III - General indicators for ESF+ support to address material deprivation. The operation will be implemented by the Agency for Social Assistance through its territorial structures in partnership with the municipalities in the country. The application of this approach is based on the Agency's legal role as a social welfare and child protection authority. A database of assisted individuals and families is available in the Agency, due to its functional role and

<sup>18</sup> Several additional indicators (eg one end product indicator and one result indicator) are possible for one type of operation. In these cases, fields 1.3 to 1.11 should be completed for each indicator.

	<p>all citizens in need turn to its territorial structures for assistance. This will ensure that assistance reaches the children most in need. The partnership with the municipalities will ensure a wide and equal coverage of the activity, its national coverage and a better coordination between all supporting activities and services at the local level with a focus on early childhood development in order to provide meaningful accompanying support. Checks performed by the Managing Authority will include, at a minimum, verification of how persons in need are identified and whether the operation's procedures have been followed; whether an assessment has been carried out for each individual case; whether recommendations for accompanying support have been formulated; whether the requirements of the procedure for providing a voucher/card for a baby meal have been followed; whether reliable mechanisms and procedures are in place for data analysis, reporting, internal monitoring and financial transfers to partner municipalities based on reported coupons. The way municipalities report on the effective delivery of food against the provided voucher/card, the mechanisms for reporting on the implemented accompanying support and its results will also be monitored. The verifications carried out will be duly documented in accordance with the rules and procedures of the Managing Authority, consistent with the approved Management and Control Systems. All necessary documents for the verification of expenditure under simplified reporting, including for the monitoring of the accompanying measures provided, will be defined in detail in the Beneficiary's Guide for the implementation and contract management of the operation.</p>
1.11 Possible perverse incentives or problems caused by this indicator, how they could be mitigated, and the estimated level of risk	NO
1.12 Total amount (national and EU) expected to be reimbursed	The total amount of the expenditure to be reimbursed will be based on the cost of the voucher/card for a baby meal, the number of targeted children and the period during which the food was received.

### **C: Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates**

1. Source of data used to calculate the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates (who produced, collected and recorded the data; where the data are stored; cut-off dates; validation, etc.):

An analysis of existing practices and a historical review of the value of food products use for the meal preparation and municipalities' approaches to defined the user taxes will be assigned. On the basis of this analysis, a standart value will be determined for the food voucher/card for a baby meal, including a method for value adjustment. The voucher will provide food for the children for the eligible period

determined under the rules of the procedure and will consist of at least soup, main course and a dessert.

Currently, no criteria and restrictions are defined by municipalities for receiving food from the baby meal centres for children from 10 months to 3 years. Access to the service is equal for all children within this age range.

2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation is relevant to the type of operation.

- Reduces the administrative burden for the contractors and the Managing Authority;
- Allows for checks performed to be focus on the impact of the support provided, rather than on reviewing large quantities of documents for minimal expenditures;
- Is based on national regulations on child nutrition requirements, allowing a fair value of the child meal voucher/card to be determined based on an analysis of quantitatively and qualitatively comparable information.
- It does not stigmatize the neediest persons nor is discriminating against other users. Depending on the practice applied in each municipality, the value of the voucher/card will cover the inherent costs for providing the service - for taxes, purchase of food products or the entire cost of the preparation of a meal per a child.
- Guarantees that the risk of the voucher/card not being used for its intended purpose is eliminated, as only the prepared food for children can be obtained in return for its provision

3. Please specify how the calculations were made, in particular including any assumptions made in terms of quality or quantities. Where relevant, statistical evidence and benchmarks should be used and attached to this annex in a format that is usable by the Commission.

Preliminary information collected by the Managing Authority on the taxes paid in 134 municipalities providing baby/children meals shows that there is a fixed daily tax in 123 of them, with a value that ranges from BGN 0.50 to BGN 4.00. Approximately 86% of the interviewed municipalities have set a tax in the range of BGN 1.00 to 2.50 BGN, 10 out of them have set taxes in the range up to 1 BGN (8%), and in 7 of them the tax is above 2,50 BGN (6%). In 2 of the remaining 11 municipalities the consumers do not pay a tax. In 9 municipalities there is no fixed amount of the tax, the value depends on the cost of the food products used in the selected menus. The analysis also showed that in almost all cases users pay taxes, with rare exceptions where users are exempted from them. The value of taxes is set annually by a decision of the respective municipal council. Municipalities applied different practices. The determination of the taxes depends on the budget of each municipality, the price of the food products used in the preparation of the meals, with accordance to the established national norms, and the number of children. At the same time, the price of the food products also varies from one municipality to another, depending on the prices agreed in the external procurement procedures under the Public Procurement Act. The cost of the prepared food – food products and inherent costs, including staff expenses, shall be covered by the budget of each municipality.

4. Please explain how you have ensured that only eligible expenditure was included in the calculation of the standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate.

Preliminary research carried out by the Managing Authority shows that the value of the taxes set does not fully cover the cost of the meal prepared, and municipalities provide their own budgets resources to finance the activity in the amount and quality required. The taxes collected top up the expenses for municipalities in providing food for the children. In this regard, the analysis will be based on a historical review of the cost of food products used for the meal preparation and the existing practices and approaches of municipalities to define user taxes. The establishment of a weighted average value per voucher/card for a baby meal will guarantee that the partner municipalities will provide meals to children from the target groups without stigmatizing them.<sup>5</sup> Assessment of the audit authority(ies) of the calculation methodology and amounts and the arrangements to ensure the verification, quality, collection and storage of data.

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